

From purchase to use to disposal, our small decisions add up. What may seem like tiny choices can have a huge impact on the amount of waste you and your family produce on a regular basis. Here's a checklist of five simple, convenient ways to reduce your waste and become a recycling rock star.

Recycle at Home – Twin Your Bins

Stop! Before you dump your junk mail, unwanted catalogs, or empty bottles and cans into the trash, shift your aim a bit so they hit your recycling bin.

How? Make sure you have a recycling bin next to every trash bin in your home. Bathroom? 2 Bins. Bedroom? 2 Bins. Garage? Yup. Make it as easy to recycle as it is to throw away, and your family will get the job done right. Bonus points for filling up the recycling bins faster.

Cap It

Finished the last drop of goodness from that plastic bottle or paper carton? Be sure to put the cap back on before dropping it into the recycling.

That cap will help the container keep its shape, making it easier to sort. Plus, those caps are pretty sturdy – sometimes half of the plastic in a bottle is in the cap – so recycling it means lots more material out of the trash.

Skip the Bag

Recycling bin full in the house? Great! When you carry it outside and dump it into your recycling cart, make sure all those bottles, cans, containers and paper are loose. If they're bagged, they might not get sorted down the line.

Why? Picture yourself as head recycling sorter. When a full bag comes your way, you don't know if it's recyclables or trash or dirty diapers (Yuck!). To play it safe, you'll probably toss the whole thing into the trash. Easy to avoid this by just skipping the bag to begin with.

Donate Old Clothes

Have your toddlers grown too big for their baby shirts? Do you have one too many outfits that are so 2005? Find a local clothing drop-off center or agency where you can donate clothing that's fallen out of favor.

Helpful hint on this one: If you haven't worn something for at least a year, you probably won't.

Measure Your Waste

The amount of trash you create should be about equal to the amount of recycling. Do a spot check now to see how you measure up off the bat. If your garbage is overflowing and your recycling is slim (or even empty!), then it's time to start practicing the suggestions, pronto.

When your trash does exceed your recycling on any given week, do a quick mental review of the previous days.

When your trash is minimal compared to recycling, do the same. You'll be able to pinpoint areas that have received or could use a little recycling TLC, then keep an eye on those areas moving forward.

It's a Breeze

Practice these helpful hints, and you'll be a gold star recycler every time. No fuss, no muss, no worries. That's the way recycling should be. Recycling is not some far-off, unattainable goal that only happens on certain occasions. It's a part of daily life.